

Bone Flutes.

Shamanism.

Palaeo-acoustics.

Harmony of the Spheres.

Ancient Healing Techniques.

Prehistoric Surgery.

Index of Ancient Sites.

Homepage.

Search the Site

Healing With Sound: Echoes of a Lost Art.

(Article By Alex Whitaker, 2012)

Abstract: *Modern experiments with sound have shown that sound can be beneficial in the recovery of patients. Music has been shown to be beneficial to us even before we are born and ultrasound is commonly used today to assist recovery of various ailments including repairing broken bones. (3) The traditional resistance to 'alternative' healing methods is being challenged by the results of experiments involving sound, and more interestingly, research at several prominent prehistoric sites appear to show that the connection between sound and healing dates back into prehistory.*

The wealth of modern clinical research documenting the usefulness for music therapy is impressive (6), (7). It has been identified as a valid complementary and alternative medicine by the National Institutes of Health and many hospitals and other organizations. Music therapy has been used with success in cases of cancer, schizophrenia, dementia, cardiovascular diseases, somatic issues, anxiety, pain, post-surgery recovery, eating disorders, depression, multiple sclerosis, deafness tinnitus, and a host of other physical, emotional, and psychological issues. Music therapy during prenatal care and during labour has been shown to be a valuable addition to other therapies like breathing exercises and specific exercises. In hospitals, music therapy is often used to help alleviate pain and increase post-surgical healing. It is often used in conjunction with anaesthesia and pain medication. It has been shown to be dramatically effective in elevating mood, alleviating depression, inducing sleep and in general, decreasing hospital stays (Hillecke *et al.* 2005). Wachiuli *et al.* (2007) found in a controlled study on 40 volunteers that subjects who engaged in recreational music-making using drumming protocol had better moods, lower stress-related cytokine interleukin-10 levels, and higher natural killer cell activity compared with the control group. These markers of course, translate to better immune system response, suggesting greater disease prevention. (4) Although we look upon healing with sound as a relatively modern realisation, there is a strong tradition of healing around the ancient world, and one which appears to reach back into prehistory.

Perhaps one of the most easily recognised means of using sound for therapy is through chanting. The use of chanting mantras for healing can be seen in the Rig-Veda, one of the oldest texts in the world. The Indian Raga system originated in the Vedic period (Rig Vedic Period) which is believed to precede the pre historic Indus Valley Civilisation. Indian tradition has a strong emphasis on the power of sound and intonation and the science of sound was very important for use in every condition of life in healing, in teaching, in evolving and accomplishment. The Vedic chants and music were intoned with utmost care as each intonation and inflection of voice could have beneficial or adverse effects. The Vedas are the oldest unbroken form of oral tradition in the world (dating from at least 1500 BC) (8), they are considered imperfect in their modern written form, and the insistence on learning the perfect notation and pronunciation of each word lies in the belief that the words have a power of their own. Mantras are chanted for knowledge, devotion and wisdom and others for spiritual and physical purification. Vedic texts, in fact, describe transcending sound as the pre-eminent means for attaining higher, spiritual consciousness.

In the West, the first record of the awareness of the power of sound for healing comes from Pythagoras of Samos (c. 580 BC), who was a philosopher, mathematician and a musician. He became aware of the profound effect that music had on the senses and emotions and declared that the soul could be purified from its irrational influences by solemn songs sung to the accompaniment of the lyre (similar in principle to the Vedas) He is reputed to have been able to soothe animals and people and is considered by many to be the founder of music therapy. He said of it:

'Music directly imitates the passions or states of the soul...when one listens to music that imitates a certain passion, he becomes imbued with the same passion; and if over a long time he habitually listens to music that rouses ignoble passions, his whole character will be shaped to an ignoble form' (1)

Plato (c 427 BC - 348 BC) said of music in 'The Republic':

"Musical training is a more potent instrument than any other, because rhythm and harmony find their way into the inward places of the soul, on which they mightily fasten, imparting grace..." (III, S401e).

In addition, Homer prescribed music to counteract mental anguish, and Asclepiades of Bithynia is said to have prescribed Phrygian music for sciatica and other illnesses. Democritus prescribed various flute melodies, and the respected Roman physician Galen applied music to his healing repertoire. Among other therapies, Galen prescribed a "medical bath" inclusive of flute song for nerve pain. (4)

We are left with little doubt that the concept of healing with sound is not as new as it might at first seem, in fact, there is much evidence to suggest that it goes back even further that the Vedic system (c. 1,500 BC), as recent research on certain prehistoric megaliths has revealed a connection with sound and healing

Palaeo-acoustics.

Following the 2008 dig at Stonehenge, two archaeologists concluded that Stonehenge was the 'Lourdes' of prehistory. Perhaps interesting then that the same site was recently recognised a few years later for creating auditory sensations.

Article: BBC. April, 2008. 'Stonehenge: The Healing Stones'.

Professor Timothy Darvill and Professor Geoff Wainwright think Stonehenge was a site of healing. "The whole purpose of Stonehenge is that it was a prehistoric Lourdes," says Wainwright. "People came here to be made well."

Darvill and Wainwright believe the smaller bluestones in the centre of the circle, rather than the huge sarsen stones on the perimeter, hold the key to the purpose of Stonehenge. The bluestones were dragged 250km from the mountains of southwest Wales using Stone Age technology. That's some journey, and there must have been a very good reason for attempting it. Darvill and Wainwright believe the reason was the magical, healing powers imbued in the stones by their proximity to traditional healing springs.

The bones that have been excavated from around Stonehenge appear to back the theory up. "There's an amazing and unnatural concentration of skeletal trauma in the bones that were dug up around Stonehenge," says Darvill. "This was a place of pilgrimage for people... coming to get healed."

[\(Quick-link to Article\)](#)

Article: HeritageDaily. March 7, 2012. 'Stonehenge Based on Magical Sensory Illusion'.

'An independent researcher in California said the layout of the stones correspond to the regular spacing of loud and quiet sounds created by acoustic interference when two instruments played the same note continuously He recruited volunteers, blindfolded them, and led them in a circle around two instruments playing the same note continuously. He then asked participants to sketch out the shape of any obstruction they thought lay between them and the instrument. Some drew circles of pillars, and one volunteer added lintels ... If these people were dancing in a circle around two musicians, and were experiencing the loud and soft region of an interference pattern, they would have felt that there were these massive objects arranged in a ring'..

[\(Quick-link to Article\)](#)

The two articles above raise the question of just how much sound was employed in prehistoric times, and for what purposes. The archaeology at Stonehenge presents an image of people coming from all over Europe with their sick/dead, and even today the area surrounding Stonehenge has the appearance of little more than an extended burial landscape. Perhaps relevant then that research on the acoustics of stone circles (Stonehenge in particular), combined with the large number of sites which appear to show a preference for 110 MHz (current experiments are showing that the specific frequency range around 110 Hz tends to stimulate a certain electrical brain rhythm associated with particular trance-like states. (9) (*Time & Mind* 1:1, March 2008), which suggests that this was an intentional design in the megaliths.

One of the most intriguing aspects of Stonehenge has been the purpose of now famous 'Preseli Bluestones', which were transported over 140 miles to the site from near [Gors Fawr](#) in Wales. The longstanding debate over the reason why stone was chosen from such a distance, when 'sarsen' stone was locally available, appears to have been met with an answer in relation to this topic, as this particular stone has a longstanding association with both healing and sound. Bluestone - or a relatively high proportion of them (perhaps as much as ten percent) have the usually rare property of being $\frac{1}{2}$ musical $\frac{1}{2}$. That is, they can ring like a bell or gong, or resound like a drum, when struck with a small hammer-stone, instead of the dull clunking sound rock-on-rock usually makes. That this property has been noted locally down the generations is shown by the $\frac{1}{2}$ Maenclochog $\frac{1}{2}$ ($\frac{1}{2}$ Ringing stones $\frac{1}{2}$) village place-name in the Preseli area'. (2) When we add this information to that provided by Geoffrey of Monmouth, who made a note in his history of Britain in 1215 AD that the 'Medicinal power of the stones was stimulated by pouring water over them'. (10). We can be sure that the Bluestones have had a longstanding tradition for being used for curative purposes. It is noted that the oldest human remains found by Parker Pearson's team date to around 3,030 B.C., at approximately the same time as the arrival of the first bluestones (Stonehenge II).

Elsewhere in Europe, the same auditory effect was being reproduced by other megalithic builders. OTSF tested the pattern of resonance in several of the ancient Maltese temples and found it occurred at a frequency of 110 or 111 hertz $\frac{1}{2}$ within the range of a low male voice. This was consistent with research published in 1996 by the Princeton Engineering Anomalies Research group, which found that some ancient megalithic chambers in the U.K. and Ireland sustained a strong resonance at a frequency of between 95 and 120 hertz. Research by Dr. Ian A. Cook and colleagues from UCLA, published in the journal *Time and Mind* in 2008, used electroencephalography (EEG) to monitor the brain activity of volunteers while they listened to different frequencies of sound. They found that at 110 hertz, the brain activity suddenly changed. The section of the brain responsible for language processing became relatively deactivated, and the areas related to mood, empathy and social behaviour $\frac{1}{2}$ switched on. $\frac{1}{2}$ (11) In the Hypogeum on Malta, it has been noted that sound reverberates at 110 Hz, and there is a hole in the wall (called the oracle hole), from which a male voice will reverberate throughout the internal chambers. In the same chamber there is an 'amplification channel' built into the ceiling. While it is not clear that the Hypogeum chambers were originally intended for, it is evident that the science of sound was both understood and employed in the construction. This same science appears to have left its mark on some of the most prolific megaliths in Europe, and it is tempting to speculate on the idea that the large numbers of Bird-bone flutes found from the Palaeolithic onwards might also be somehow related to therapeutic purposes.

[\(Palaeo-acoustics\)](#) [\(Bone-flutes\)](#) [\(Harmony of the Spheres\)](#)

[\(Prehistoric Surgery\)](#)

[\(Ancient Healing Techniques\)](#)

References:

- 1). Donald Grout, *A History of Western Music* (Norton, 1988): 7-8.
- 2). <http://www.landscape-perception.com/archaeoacoustics/>
- 3). <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-glasgow-west-15262297>
- 4). <http://voices.yahoo.com/music-therapy-comes-age-5942042.html>
- 6). <http://articles.latimes.com/2010/mar/01/health/la-he-0301-brain-music-therapy-20100301>
- 7). http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/2008-06-16-music-healing_N.htm
- 8). http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vedic_chant
- 9). <http://www.landscape-perception.com/archaeoacoustics/>
- 10). <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history-archaeology/light-on-stonehenge.html?c=y&page=2>
- 11). <http://www.theepochtimes.com/n2/science/ancient-architects-on-same-wavelength-26773.html>

